

Australia swelters through record-breaking heatwave

4 hours ago



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Image caption

Australians have flocked to beaches and watering holes to cool off

Australia has just sweltered through at least five of its 10 warmest days on record, authorities estimate.

An extreme heatwave has afflicted the nation since Saturday, causing wildlife deaths, bushfires and an increase in hospital admissions.

Australia's Bureau of Meteorology said preliminary readings showed daily national temperature highs of 40C.

The town of Noona in New South Wales meanwhile recorded a night-time temperature of 35.9C.

It was the highest minimum temperature ever recorded anywhere in Australia, the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) said.

Temperatures on Friday will soar above 42C in "broad areas", the bureau predicted.

Why Australia's extreme heat might be here to stay

Australia drought seen from the air

Forecasters have compared conditions to the nation's worst heatwave in 2013, where the mercury soared to 39C for seven consecutive days.

The hottest day on record for Australia is 7 January 2013, when the national average maximum temperature was 40.3C.



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Image caption

A beachgoer in Sydney on Tuesday



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Image caption

A woman cools down with her dog at Port Melbourne Beach

"The current heatwave ranks alongside that of January 2013 as the most extensive and prolonged heatwave on record over Australia," BOM senior meteorologist Blair Trewin told the BBC earlier this week.

"There have been other notable heatwaves but none affecting such a large area of the country."

Where is affected?

A large swathe of New South Wales is bearing the brunt of the heat, with temperatures also soaring in parts of Queensland, South Australia, Victoria and the Northern Territory.

Temperatures are expected to drop in southern and central areas over the weekend.

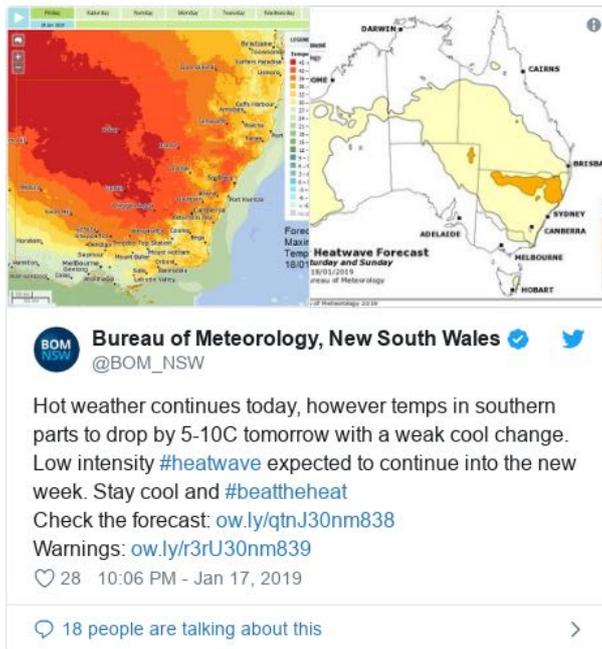


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Report

But meteorologists say they are then set to rise in Western Australia. Parts of the state could see temperatures up to 14 degrees higher than average in the days to come.

Is it dangerous?

Meteorologists say that the heatwave has broken heat records at more than 10 places around Australia, largely central inland locations. The record-setters included the outback town of Tarcoola in South Australia which soared to 49C on Tuesday, and Port Augusta in South Australia which reached 48.9C.

How 'one-third' of a bat population died in two days

Sixteen people in South Australia were admitted to hospital due to the heat on Wednesday, the state government said. Authorities in several states have also issued health warnings urging people to stay indoors and minimise physical activity, with heightened concerns for the elderly, the chronically ill and children.



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Image caption
Australians are used to high temperatures - even though the current heatwave appears to be particularly bad



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EPA

Image caption
State authorities have issued heat stress warnings to people

In coastal cities, many Australian flocked to pools, beaches and other watering holes to cool off. Some people also shared their attempts to cool down on social media, including one Reddit user who wrote that he was "refrigerating my pyjamas to survive the stuffiness of my bedroom".

Dozens of bushfires were burning across Victoria, Tasmania and New South Wales on Thursday in conditions exacerbated by the heat and drought.

At Cobar's Empire Hotel, temperatures reached 50C on Friday.

"It's very difficult but we push through," bar attendant Britney-Lee Fazulla told the Sydney Morning Herald newspaper.

She said it was the worst heatwave she'd experienced.

There were also reports of mass deaths in native bat colonies in New South Wales, and fruit orchards spoiling under the Sun.

Up to one million fish are believed to have died along river banks.

How is climate change affecting Australia?

Last week, officials confirmed that 2018 and 2017 had been Australia's third and fourth hottest years on record respectively.

The bureau's **State of the Climate 2018 report** said climate change had led to an increase in extreme heat events.

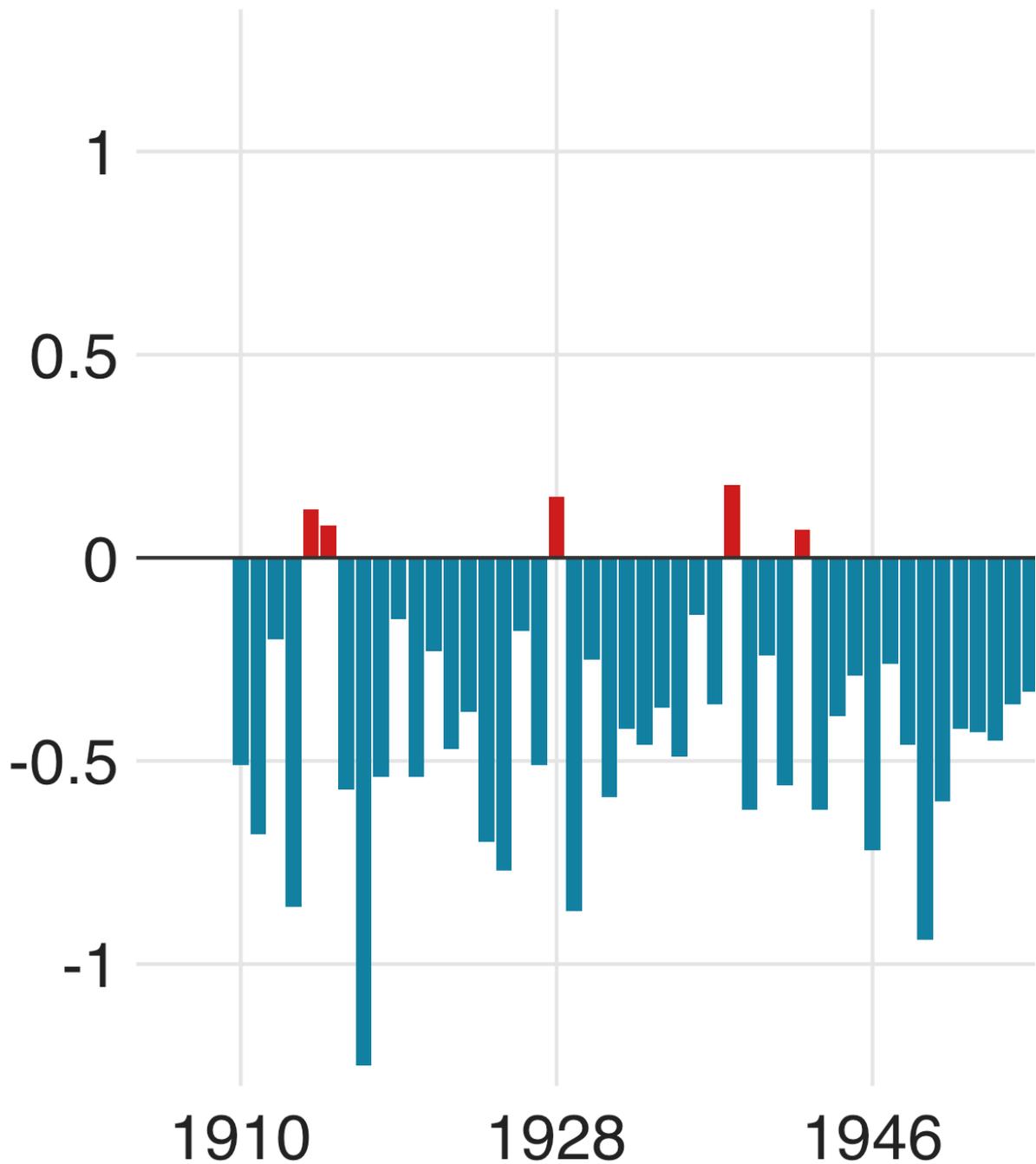
Australia's deadly relationship with heat

Even if global temperatures are contained to the Paris accord limit of a 2C rise above pre-industrial levels, **scientists believe the country is facing a dangerous new normal.**

Parts of eastern Australia suffered their worst drought in recent history last year, while **thousands of Australians fled their homes** when bushfires swept through Queensland in November.

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Annual mean temperature abo



Note: Average is calculated from 1961-1990 da

Source: Australian Government Bureau o

